

TOM'S STORY



MY CURRENT NAME
IS TOM BLAKE.

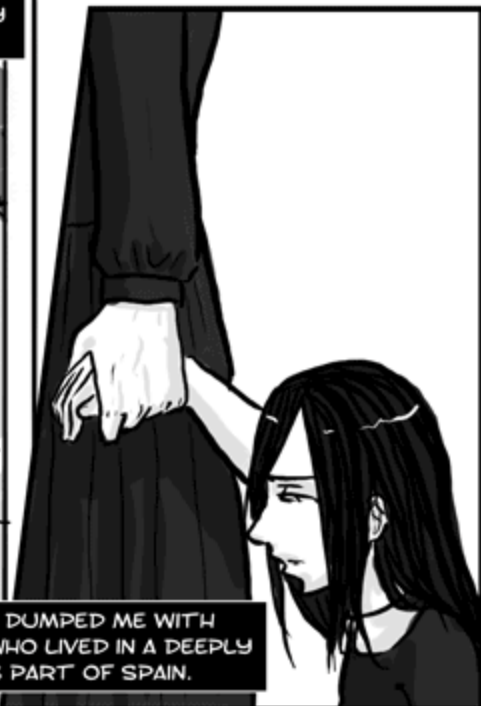
I'M CURRENTLY SITTING
NEXT TO ALEX MURFY, WHO IS
ALSO CURRENTLY ON FIRE.

THIS IS MY STORY.

I STARTED OUT LIFE AS A MISTAKE - AN UNWANTED SIDE EFFECT FROM SOME FLING MY MOTHER HAD WITH A GROUPIE ON TOUR.



MY MOTHER DUMPED ME WITH HER PARENT'S WHO LIVED IN A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS PART OF SPAIN.



I SPENT THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF MY LIFE FORCED INTO DRESSES AND LEARNING HOW TO LOVE GOD LIKE A GOOD GIRL

NOTE - ALL DIALOGUE WITH THE "< >" AROUND IT IS IN SPANISH

THAT ALL CHANGED THOUGH WHEN I GOT OLD ENOUGH TO TOUR WITH MY MUM DURING THE HOLIDAYS.

I REMEMBER THOSE TIMES AS SOME OF THE HAPPIEST IN MY LIFE.

WE MADE JUST ENOUGH MONEY TO GET BY, WITH A LITTLE LEFT OVER FOR THINGS WE WANTED.

THE BEST PART THOUGH WAS THE FREEDOM I HAD COMPARED TO HOW I'D BEEN RAISED

<RIGHT, LET'S GET YOU SOME REAL KIDS CLOTHES>

<REALLY?>

<YEP>

I DON'T LIKE MY HAIR- IT'S ANNOYING

I GOT TO RUN ABOUT, BE LOUD, WEAR TROUSERS, CLIMB TREES, AND GENERALLY ACT LIKE A KID.

MAKE MINE LIKE YOURS.

I REFUSED TO WEAR PINK, OR DO ANYTHING REMOTELY **SISSY**, WHICH EARNED ME THE NICKNAME **TOMBOY**, LATER SHORTENED TO **TOM**.

<LOOK AT MY HAIR! IT'S **AWESOME!**>

<YOU LOOK LIKE AN ALIEN.>

TOM YOU SHIT-GET DOWN!

MY MUM WAS BUSY A LOT, BUT SHE STILL FOUND THE TIME TO TEACH ME GUITAR, SOMETHING WE FOUND THAT I HAD A KNACK FOR.



THE REST OF THE TIME I SPENT WITH THE ROADIES, LEARNING HOW TO SET UP MOST SOUND AND LIGHT SYSTEMS



AND YOU SEE THERE TOM? IF A GUY EVER STARTS SOMETHING, JUST PUNCH HIM THERE.

THEY TAUGHT ME LOTS OF THINGS, ESPECIALLY STUFF ABOUT HOW TO WIN FIGHTS, EVEN IF YOU HAD TO FIGHT DIRTY TO DO IT.

YOU'RE SUCH AN ASS.



THE CAREFREE SUMMERS
DIDN'T LAST THOUGH.

I HATE
YOU SO
MUCH.

AW- DON'T YOU
WANT TO LOOK
PRETTY FOR YOUR
MUM'S WEDDING?

WHEN I WAS 10 MY MOTHER
DECIDED TO GET MARRIED TO SOME
GUY SHE'D FALLEN IN LOVE WITH.

HE CAME FROM ENGLAND SO WE
MOVED THERE TO LIVE WITH HIM.

<ASSHOLE>

ENGLISH SCHOOLS WERE
WEIRD, BUT I ADAPTED
WELL. SPEAKING
ENGLISH HELPED.

RIGHT, SO TELL
US A BIT ABOUT
YOURSELF MARIA...

MY MUM AND HIM ONLY
LASTED A COUPLE OF YEARS
BEFORE THEY GOT DIVORCED.

HE WAS AN OKAY GUY
THOUGH, AND THERE WERE
NO REAL HARD FEELINGS.

IT'S TOM.

WHAT?
BUT...

MY NAME.
TOM.

...RIGHT.

AFTERWARDS
WE STAYED IN ENGLAND
BECAUSE OF MUM'S WORK.

YOU DON'T
MIND?

MEH, HE
WAS KINDA
BORING
ANYWAY.

MY FIRST FEW YEARS OF SCHOOL WERE OKAY, BUT THEN I GOT MOVED UP TO SECONDARY SCHOOL.



MMMMSSSS-SHE HIT ME IN THE SHINS AGAIN!

OH COME ON!
IT'S HOCKEY!
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?!



MARIA-

TOM!

MARIA-
GO CHANGE. I
DON'T WANT TO
HEAR ABOUT YOU
HURTING YET
ANOTHER
PERSON.



THERE THE GENDERS WERE EVEN MORE DIVIDED THAN BEFORE, AND PEOPLE STOPPED CALLING ME TOM.

I HAD TO ENDURE HORRIBLE PE LESSONS FILLED WITH SUCH JOYS AS NETBALL OR GIRL'S HOCKEY.

AND THEY MADE ME
TAKE OUT MY PIERCINGS.

AND TAKE
THOSE DAMN
PIERCINGS
OUT!



<BITCH>

MY BODY WAS GROWING, AND I'D STARTED TO GET SOME FORM OF BREASTS. THEY JUST GOT IN THE WAY REALLY, SO I WORE TANKS TO KEEP THEM FLAT.

BUT OTHER GIRLS EMPHASIZED THEM, WEARING PADDED BRAS AND THINGS TO MAKE THEM LOOK EVEN BIGGER.


DAMN THINGS.

I JUST DIDN'T GET IT.

I DIDN'T FIT IN WITH THE OTHER GIRLS, AND TO BE HONEST I DIDN'T WANT TO.


AND I DIDN'T FIT IN WITH THE BOYS EITHER BECAUSE NONE OF THEM WANTED SOME CHICK IN THEIR GROUP

I JUST DIDN'T BELONG ANYWHERE.

A black and white comic panel showing a woman with curly hair and a headband talking to a young man with short dark hair. The woman is standing and gesturing with her hand, while the man is sitting at a desk, looking down at something in his hands.

THE DAY I GOT MY FIRST PERIOD WAS ONE OF THE WORST DAYS OF MY LIFE.

MUM GAVE ME THE TALK ABOUT IT, WHICH WAS MORTIFYING.

A black and white comic panel showing a young man with dark hair lying in bed, seen from behind. He is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and is looking down, appearing to be crying or in distress. His hands are clasped behind his head.

WHEN I GOT TO MY ROOM I CRIED FOR HOURS, LIKE THE WOMAN I WAS.

I WAS DISGUSTED AT MYSELF, AND AT THE REPULSIVE THINGS THAT MY BODY WAS DOING THAT I DIDN'T WANT.

AFTER THAT THINGS
KINDA WENT DOWNHILL FOR ME.

YOU PLAY?

I TRIED SMOKING AT SOME
POINT, DECIDED I LIKED IT
AND KEPT DOING IT.

WELL, YEAH,
IT'S NOT JUST
SOME ACCESSORY
I CARRY AROUND
TO GET CHICKS.

WHAT'S
YOUR NAME,
KID?

THE SMELL KINDA REMINDED
ME OF THOSE HOLIDAYS
ON TOUR WITH MUM.

TOM.

I FOUND SOME FRIENDS OUTSIDE
OF SCHOOL. THEY WERE A LOT
OLDER THAN ME, BUT IT MEANT
THEY DIDN'T CARE ABOUT CALLING
ME TOM AS MUCH.

I STARTED GOING TO THEIR PARTIES
AND LEARNT HOW EASY IT WAS TO GET
DRUNK AND LOSE YOUR SELF-

I CHOSE TO FORGET MY PROBLEMS IN THE
BOTTOM OF A BOTTLE, CAN OR WHATEVER
ELSE HAPPENED TO BE GOING AROUND

AFTER ALL WHO WANTED TO ACCEPT
THAT THEY HATED THE ENTIRE MAKE
UP OF THE FLESH THAT THEY WERE IN?

I DIDN'T ANYWAY. I TOOK
THE COWARDS WAY OUT.



BUT THAT MADE ME FEEL LIKE SUCH A WOMAN, SO I IGNORED THAT VOICE, EVEN WITH THE BILE IN MY THROAT.

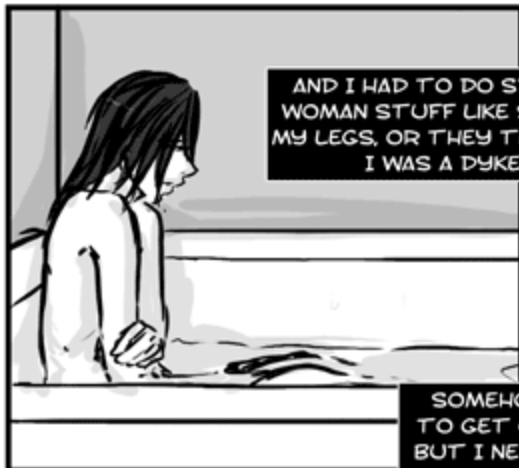
IT WAS THOSE LITTLE THINGS THAT GOT TO ME THE MOST REALLY.

THINGS LIKE SEX.

LIKE HOW I LIKED MEN, BUT FOR THEM TO LIKE ME I HAD TO ACT LIKE SOME KIND OF BIMBO.



AND I HAD TO DO STUPID WOMAN STUFF LIKE SHAVING MY LEGS, OR THEY THOUGHT I WAS A DYKE.



SOMEHOW I MANAGED TO GET GUYS THOUGH, BUT I NEVER LET THEM DO MUCH WITH ME.



BUT THEN ONE NIGHT I
GOT SO DRUNK THAT I GUESS
I JUST DIDN'T SAY NO.

ERRG..

NO.

NO!

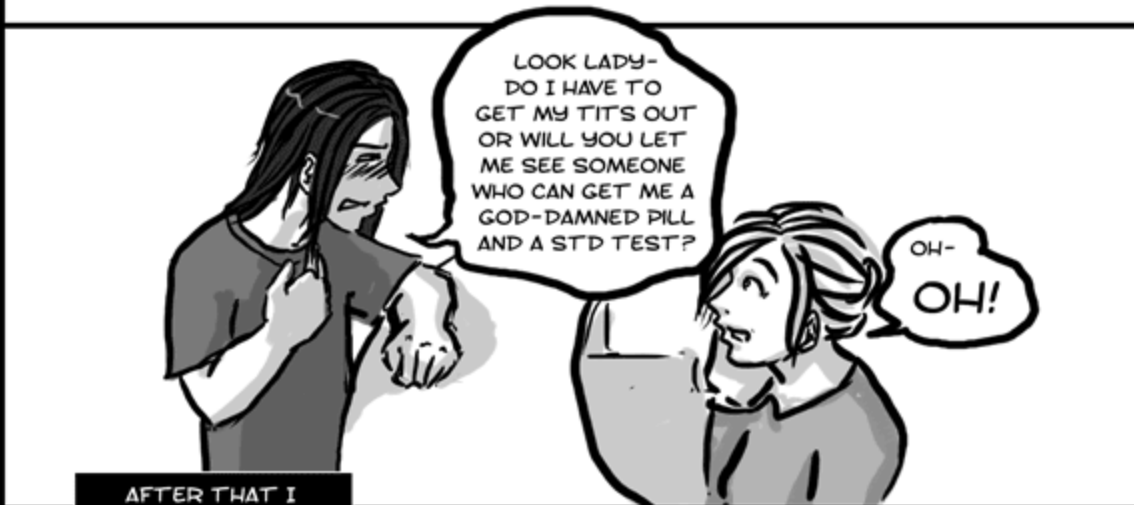
NO
NO NO
NO!

NO!

OH
GOD!

FUCK-
DON'T
THROW
UP

DON'T
THROW
UP!



AFTER THAT I NEVER DRANK AGAIN.

THAT EXPERIENCE HELPED ME DRAG MYSELF
OUT OF THE HOLE I'D DUG MYSELF INTO.



I TOOK A GOOD LOOK AT
MYSELF, TRYING TO FIGURE OUT
WHAT I HATED SO MUCH.

THE ONLY THING I COULD PLACE AT
THE TIME WAS THAT I FELT WEAK.



DRINKING HAD HELPED ME FORGET PROBLEMS,
BUT IT HAD MADE ME THIN AND SKINNY.

AND SO I SET ABOUT
TO CHANGE THAT.

I WANTED TO BE STRONG, WITH
A BODY I WOULD BE PROUD OF



SMOKING HOWEVER WAS ONE OF THE BAD HABITS THAT I COULDN'T BREAK.



MARIA
CLAIRE
BLAKE!

GAH!

<I KNEW SOMETHING
WAS WRONG THESE
PAST FEW MONTHS!>

<I THOUGHT I WAS
BEING PARANOID- BUT
OBVIOUSLY I WAS
RIGHT!>

<WHAT ELSE HAVE
YOU BEEN DOING
BEHIND MY BACK?!>

<N-NOTHING
MUM->

<THERE BETTER
NOT BE ANYTHING!>

<HOW COULD YOU DO THIS
TO YOURSELF? YOU'VE SEEN
WHAT IT'S DONE TO ME AND
GRANDMA->

<HOW COULD
YOU EVEN *THINK*
OF PICKING IT UP?>

<YOU'RE GOING TO
STOP RIGHT NOW OR
I SWEAR TO GOD->

I WAS PRETTY MUCH
ADDICTED, BUT I KNEW
THAT I COULD STOP IF GIVEN
THE RIGHT ... MOTIVATION.

<YOU LET
ME GET A
TATTOO
AND I'LL
STOP>

<WHAT?>



<OH YEAH, BECAUSE THAT'S SO MUCH WORSE COMPARED TO OH, LET'S SAY -CANCER.>



<A TATTOO? WHY?>

<YOU'RE FAR TOO YOUNG TO GET ONE- THOSE THINGS ARE FOR LIFE->

<YOU'LL REGRET IT ONE DAY, AND IT'S NOT GOING TO COME OFF.>



<IF I WANT TO SMOKE, I'LL SMOKE. I CAN JUST BUY FAGS AT SCHOOL- YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM DOING IT!>



<WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE UP SMOKING RIGHT NOW- AND YOU'RE NOT GETTING A FUCKING TATTOO EITHER!>



<BUT - IF YOU LET ME GET A TATTOO, I'LL STOP>



<YOU'RE SUCH A STUBBORN BITCH.>

<I LEARNT FROM THE BEST.>



<FINE! RUIN YOUR SKIN- SEE IF I CARE!>
<BUT YOU'RE PAYING FOR IT YOURSELF!>

SLAM!



OKAY- AND
YOU'RE DONE.

AND SO I GOT A JOB AS A
PAPER "BOY" AND SAVED UP
FOR MY FIRST TATTOO.

I PICKED A SIMPLE SET OF CIRCLES
ON MY SHOULDER. IT WASN'T MUCH,
BUT TO ME THEY SYMBOLISED ME
BECOMING WHOLE AND COMPLETE.

IT WAS THE START OF MATCHING
WHAT I WAS ON THE OUTSIDE TO
WHAT I FELT I WAS ON THE INSIDE.

<YOU
HAPPY
NOW?>

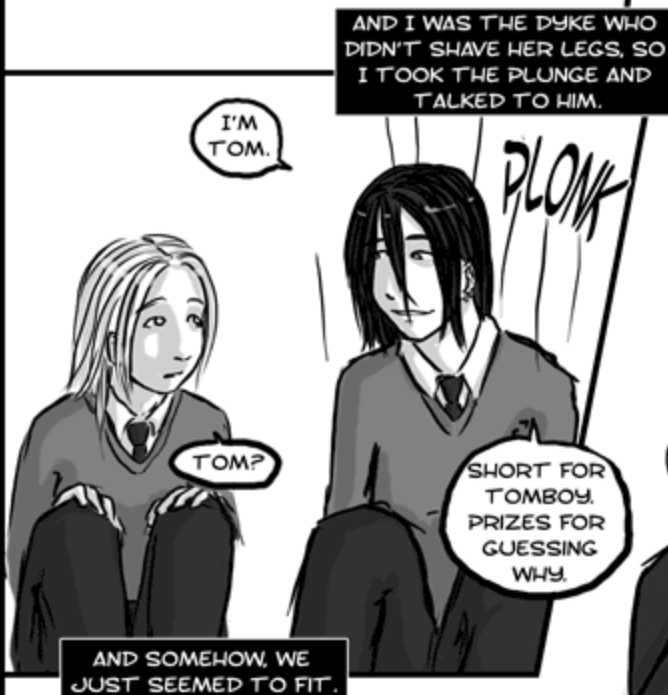
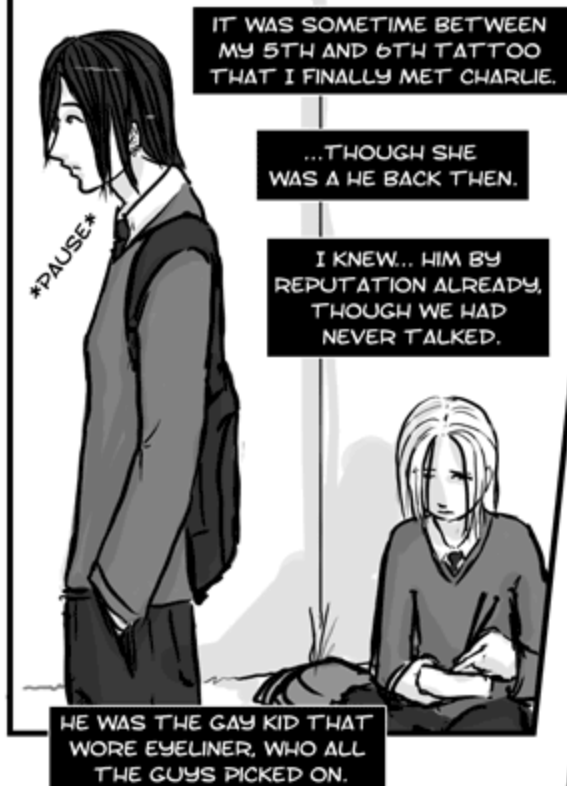
<YES, YES
I AM.>

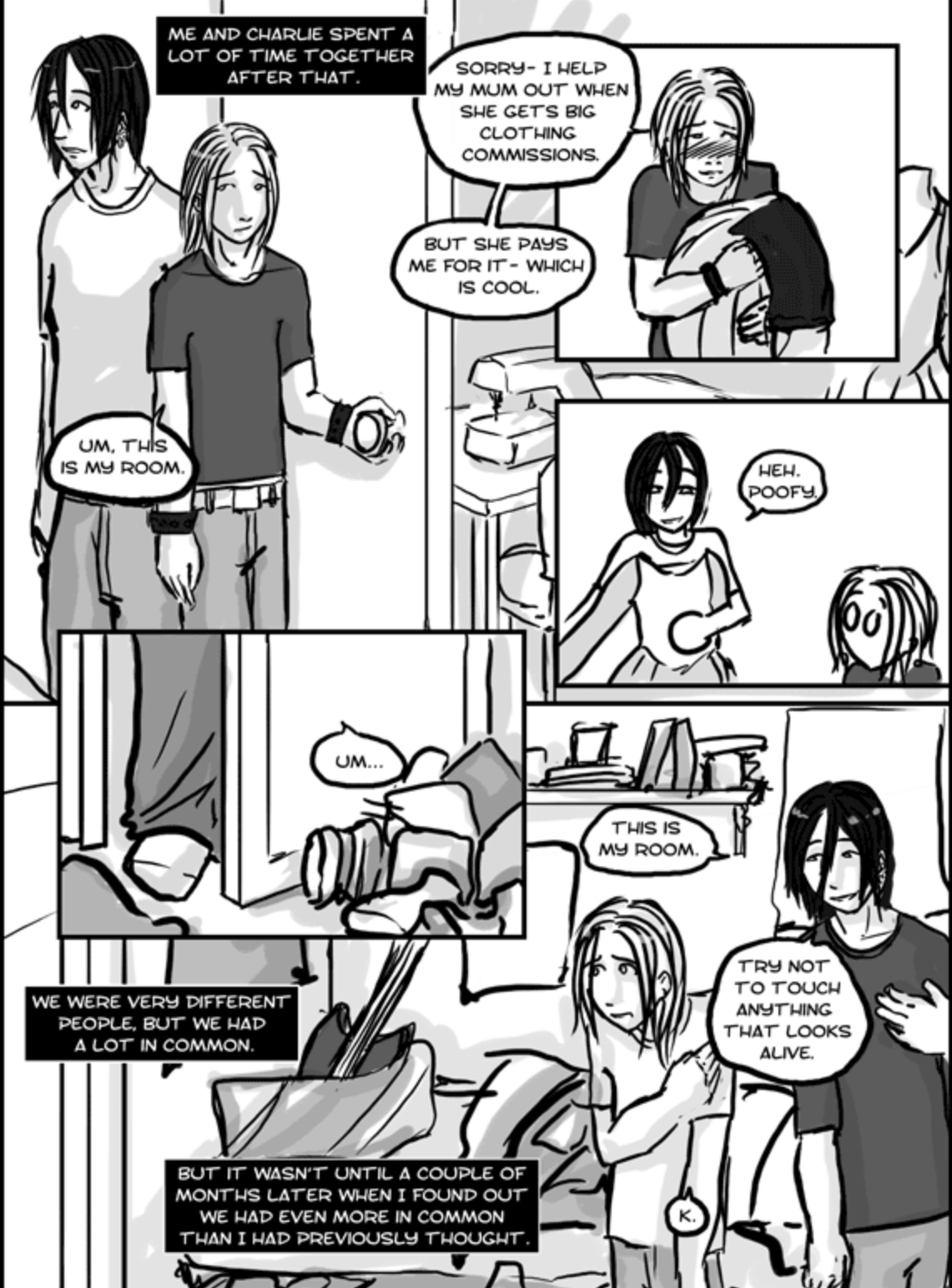
<THANKS MUM-
I LOVE YOU.>

<OH.>

<WELL...
GOOD.>

THE FIRST OF MANY CIRCLES.





ME AND CHARLIE SPENT A LOT OF TIME TOGETHER AFTER THAT.

SORRY- I HELP MY MUM OUT WHEN SHE GETS BIG CLOTHING COMMISSIONS.

BUT SHE PAYS ME FOR IT - WHICH IS COOL.

UM, THIS IS MY ROOM.

HEH. POOFY.

UM...

THIS IS MY ROOM.

WE WERE VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLE, BUT WE HAD A LOT IN COMMON.

TRY NOT TO TOUCH ANYTHING THAT LOOKS ALIVE.

BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL A COUPLE OF MONTHS LATER WHEN I FOUND OUT WE HAD EVEN MORE IN COMMON THAN I HAD PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT.

K.



HELLO
MARIA.



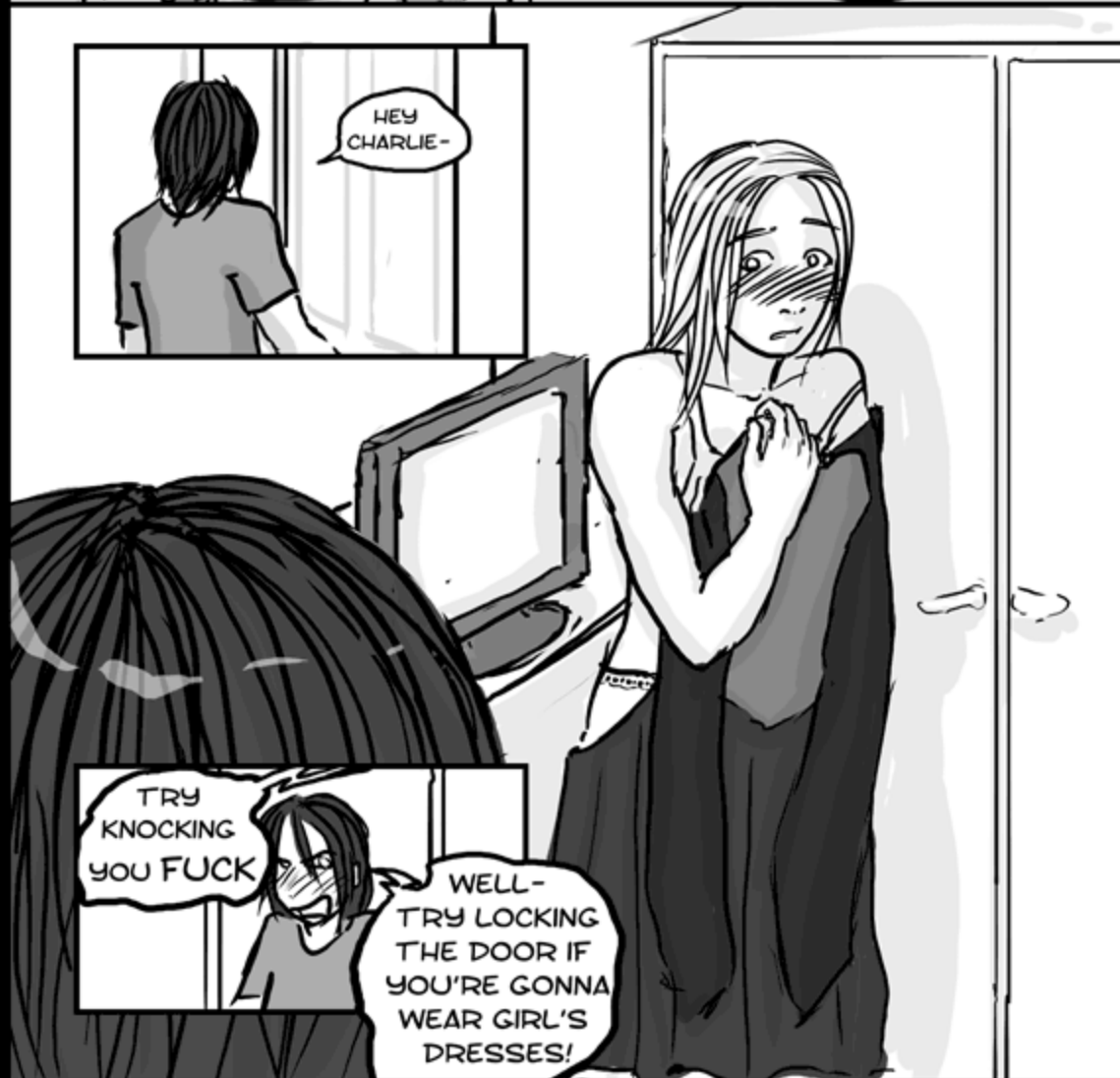
HI- IS
CHARLIE
THERE?

YEAH, HE'S
UPSTAIRS.

THANKS.



HEY
CHARLIE-



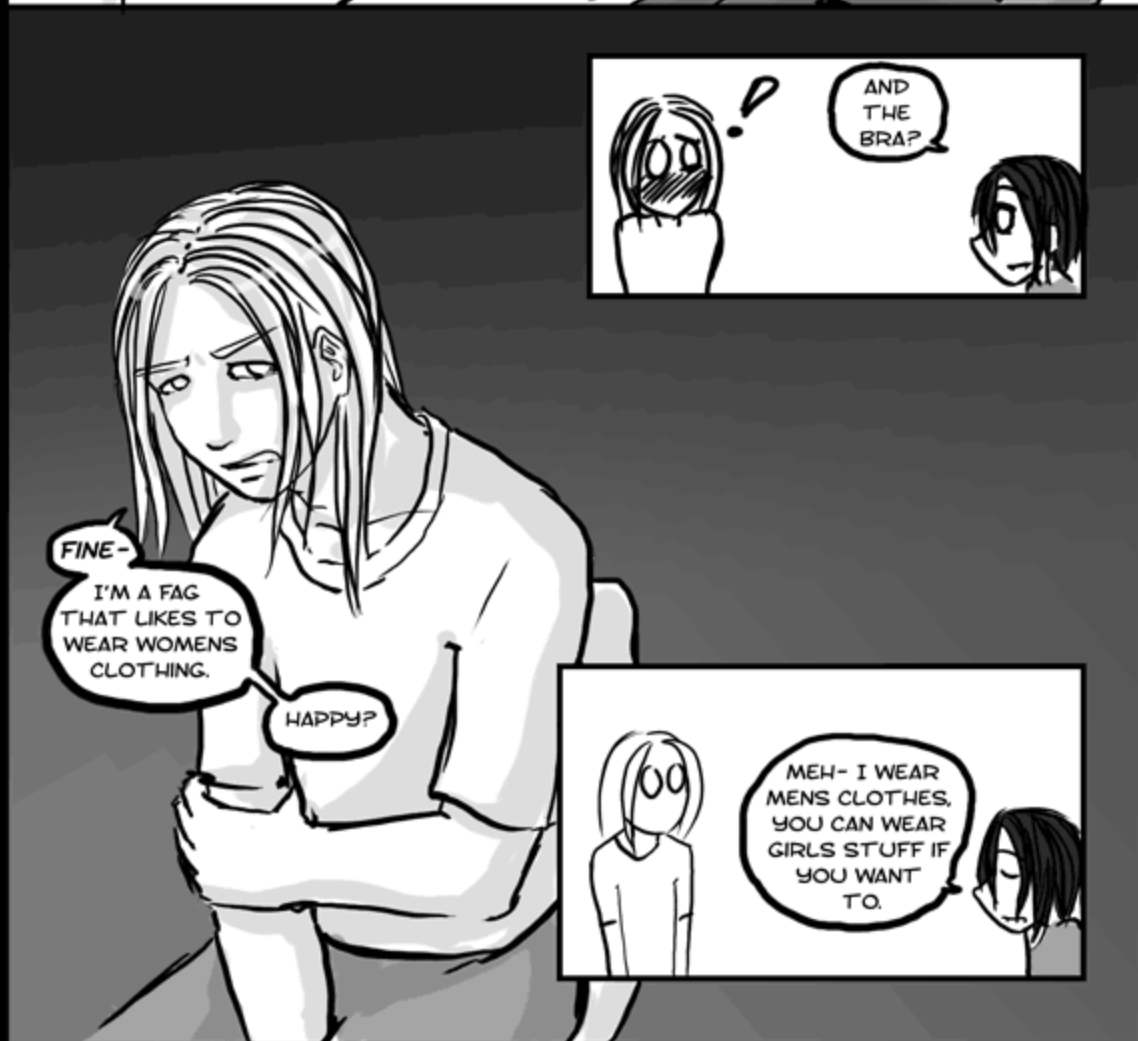
TRY
KNOCKING
YOU FUCK

WELL-
TRY LOCKING
THE DOOR IF
YOU'RE GONNA
WEAR GIRL'S
DRESSES!

SO ANY
REASON WHY I
JUST WALKED IN
ON YOU WEARING
A DRESS?

I WELL- I-I'D
JUST FINISHED IT-
AND IT WAS PRETTY
MUCH MY SIZE-

SO I - I FIGURED
IT WOULDN'T HURT
TO TRY IT ON.



FINE-

I'M A FAG
THAT LIKES TO
WEAR WOMENS
CLOTHING.

HAPPY?



AND
THE
BRA?



MEH- I WEAR
MENS CLOTHES.
YOU CAN WEAR
GIRLS STUFF IF
YOU WANT
TO.



IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER I THINK I MAY BE GAY.



NO- I LIKE MEN.

BUT IN A GAY WAY.

<ALL
OF IT?>

AND WITH THAT SHORT AND
AWKWARD CONVERSATION, EVERY
THING BEGAN TO FIT IN PLACE.

THE REASON I HATED MY
BODY WAS BECAUSE IT WAS
THE WRONG ONE.

AND SO ALL I HAD TO
DO WAS CHANGE IT

I SHAVED MY HAIR OFF,
AND STARTED BINDING MY
BREASTS DOWN.

<YEAH!>

<WELL,
IF YOU'RE
SURE...>

IT FELT LIKE A WEIGHT OFF
MY SHOULDERS, AND WELL,
MY CHEST TOO.

WOW-
THEY REALLY ARE
SQUISHED DOWN!


ARE YOU
NEARLY DONE
YET?

ALMOST!


THE NEXT THING WAS
TO GET A TATTOO TO
CELEBRATE MY DISCOVERY.

IT WAS A PRETTY BIG
ONE THAT TOOK THREE
SESSIONS TO COMPLETE.

IT WAS A SNAKE THAT RAN ALL THE
WAY DOWN MY ARM. NO GUESSES AS
TO THE IMAGERY BEHIND THAT ONE.



EW- I'M NOT
GETTING CHANGED
WHERE THE DYKE
CAN SEE ME.



UNFORTUNATELY MY NEW
LOOK DIDN'T GO DOWN
THAT WELL AT SCHOOL.

APPARENTLY
SHORT HAIR=
LESBIAN

DON'T FLATTER
YOURSELF YOU
SKANKY WHORE!

EVEN IF I WAS A
DYKE I WOULDN'T
LOOK TWICE AT YOU-
YOU'D BE A SHIT LAY
'CAUSE YOU'VE BEEN
RIDDEN SO MANY TIMES
I WOULDN'T EVEN BE ABLE
TO FEEL THE SIDES!

AND I'D NEVER BEEN VERY GOOD
AT KEEPING MY MOUTH SHUT WHEN
PEOPLE ARE BEING IGNORANT.



«YOU SAID
WHAT?!»

«IT WAS
TOTALLY
WORTH IT.»

«A-ARE
YOU A
LESBIAN?»

«NOPE-
I LIKE
COCK.»

HEADMASTER



TOM!



AFTER THAT MUM SENT ME TO A SELF DEFENSE CLASS SO I WOULDN'T GET BEATEN UP SO MUCH.

I'M KINA-
WELCOME HOW TO
LEARNING HOW TO
GET YOUR ASS
KICKED BY ME.



I WENT ALONG HAPPILY, BECAUSE I
LIKED THE IDEA OF GETTING STRONGER,
ESPECIALLY IN THE UPPER BODY.



MY SENSEI WASN'T WHAT I HAD EXPECTED,
BUT SHE WAS COMPLETELY PERFECT.

AND SO I LEARNED KARATE.

AND PLAYED MUSIC.

YOUR PIERCINGS
ARE A WEAKNESS—
EITHER TAKE THEM
OUT OR GET FAST
ENOUGH THAT I
CAN'T.

TRY IT
ON.

MR
SEWING
MACHINE

OH!

TOSS

AND HUNG WITH CHARLIE.

SUPER
BRA! WITH
EPIC POWERS
OF SQUISH!

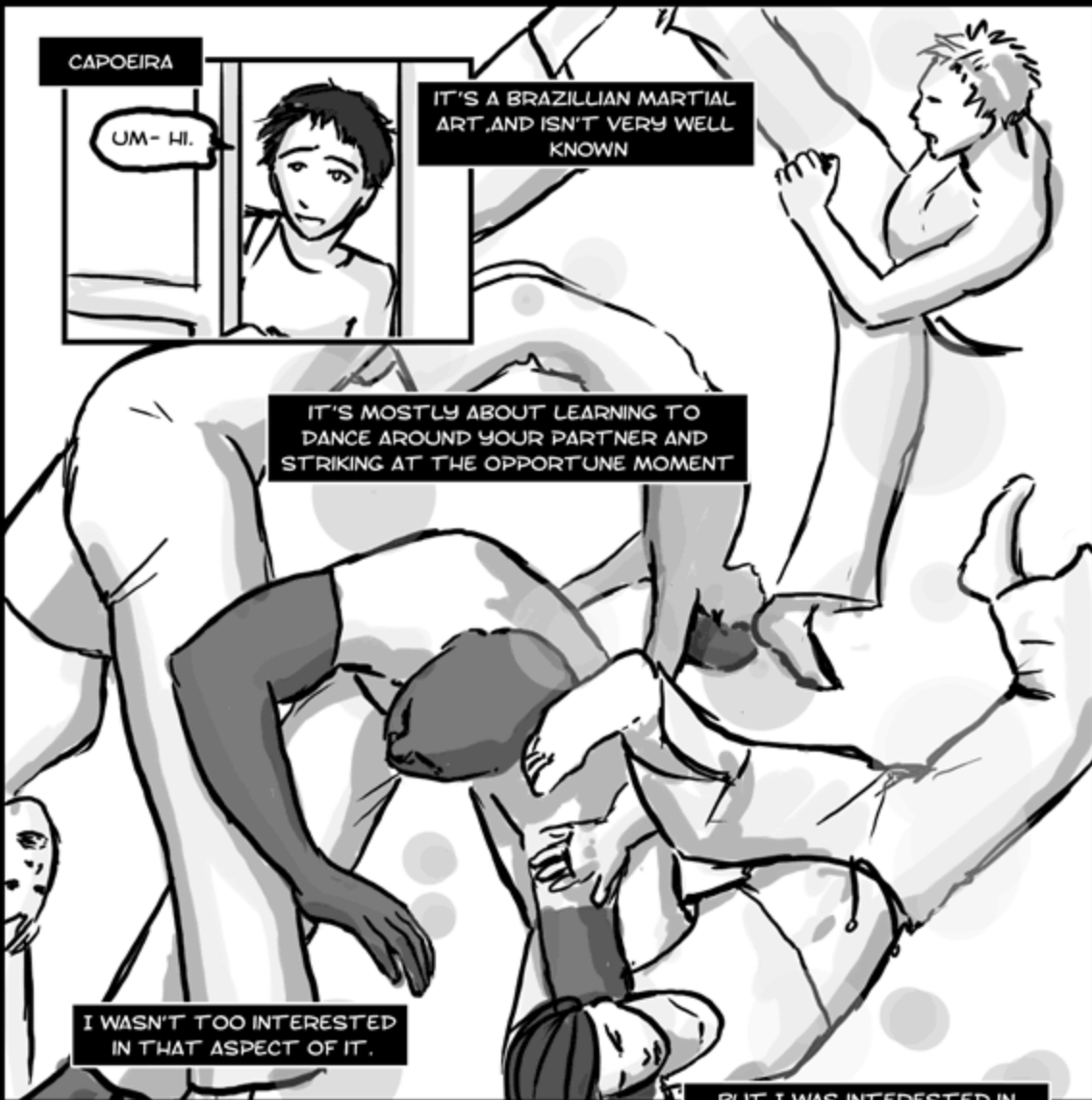
GREAT TO
SEE IT WORKS.

MAYBE NOW
YOU'LL STOP
FAINTING IN
KARATE.

LIFE WAS GOOD, OR AS
GOOD AS GOOD GET'S.







I THREW MYSELF INTO MASTERING IT, EVEN IF IT MEANT THAT I SPENT THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS ON MY HANDS.

<TOM!
STOP FUCKING
DOING THAT-->

<MRS WINDROSS
DOWNSTAIRS THINKS
YOU'RE BEING
POSSESSED!>

<FINE!>

FLIP

TADA!

LOOK-
I HAVE A
SIX-PACK!


COMBINED WITH KARATE, I
FINALLY BEGAN TO GET THE
STRENGTH I WAS AFTER.

VERY NICE TOM.
NOW PUT IT AWAY-
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY
ONE THAT LIKES MEN.




SHE HAD BEEN LOOKING AT SURGERY SITES AND THINGS. WE BOTH WANTED TO CHANGE OUR BODIES, BUT SHE WAS THE FIRST ONE TO GO ABOUT MAKING IT A REALITY.






WOULD YOU
GO THROUGH
WITH IT THOUGH?



HORMONES YES,
CHEST, YES, ANY SCARS
I GET CAN BE COVERED
UP WITH TATTOOS.

AND I WANT
MY WOMB OUT
AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE.




BUT.. THEY
CAN'T REALLY
MAKE A REAL PENIS
YET.. AND IT'S A
PRETTY VICIOUS
SURGERY.

I GUESS... I'D HOPED
THAT I'D JUST GET
SURGERY, AND THEN
EVERYTHING WOULD
BE FINE.

I'D BE IN THE RIGHT
BODY, AND I'D BE THE
MAN I ALWAYS KNEW
I WAS.

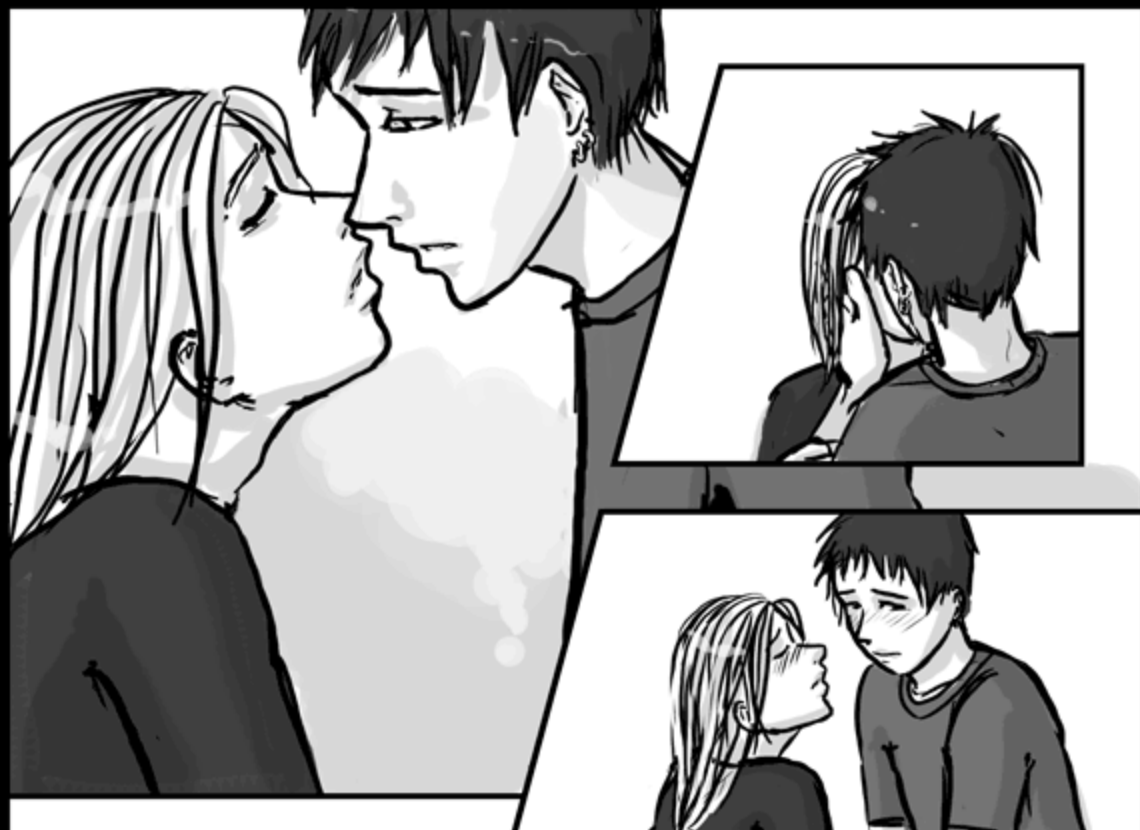
I'D STOP BEING
SOME FREAK GIRL THAT
JUST DRESSES LIKE A
GUY FOR KICKS.

BUT MY BODY'S ALWAYS
GOING TO BE FUCKED UP -
NO MATTER HOW MUCH
SURGERY I HAVE.



HEY - IT'S OKAY-
I KNOW HAVING A PENIS
AND STUFF IS IMPORTANT
THING ABOUT BEING A MAN
FOR YOU- BUT IT DOESN'T
REALLY MATTER THAT
MUCH.

YOU'LL ALWAYS
BE A MAN, WHAT'S
ACTUALLY THERE
WON'T CHANGE THAT.



SORRY- WAS
THAT OKAY?
I MEAN I'VE
NEVER-

NO- I - IT
WAS VERY NICE.

BUT I STILL,
AH, PREFER
MEN.



OH.
THANKS, I
GUESS.

I'M GONNA
PROBABLY GO
NOW.

I'LL
SEE YOU
TOMORROW?

K



I WENT BACK TO CHARLIE'S THE NEXT DAY, LIKE I'D PROMISED

I WANTED TO PUT THE WHOLE KISS INCIDENT BEHIND US AND GO BACK TO BEING FRIENDS, LIKE NORMAL.



FOR ME IT HAD BEEN A MOMENT OF ... WEAKNESS? I HAD BEEN FEELING DOWN, AND CHARLIE WANTED TO COMFORT ME, SO I LET HER.

I JUST HOPED THAT SHE WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING TOO DRASTIC AFTERWARDS.



NICE TRY
SENORITA-

BUT WHILE YOUR
BUM DOES LOOK LOVELY IN
THOSE JEANS, YOU'D HATE
BEING A MAN FOR ME.

NOW GO TART YOURSELF
UP AND PUT ON A FROCK-

I DECIDED TO
MAKE IT UP TO
CHARLIE THE WAY
I ALWAYS CHEERED
MYSELF UP

I'M TAKING YOU TO GET YOUR
EARS PIERCED SO YOU CAN WEAR
PETTY GIRLIE THINGS IN THEM
AND USE YOUR HAIR TO HIDE
THEM FROM YOUR MUM.

ARE YOU
CRAZY? WHAT IF
SOMEONE SEES
ME?

NO ONE WILL RECOGNISE
YOU- ALL THEY'LL SEE IS
A BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN A
POOFY DRESS.

WITH A DAY OUT IN DRAG
AND A NEW BODY MOD.

AND HOPEFULLY AFTER THAT
WE WOULD GO BACK TO BEING
BEST FRIENDS AGAIN.



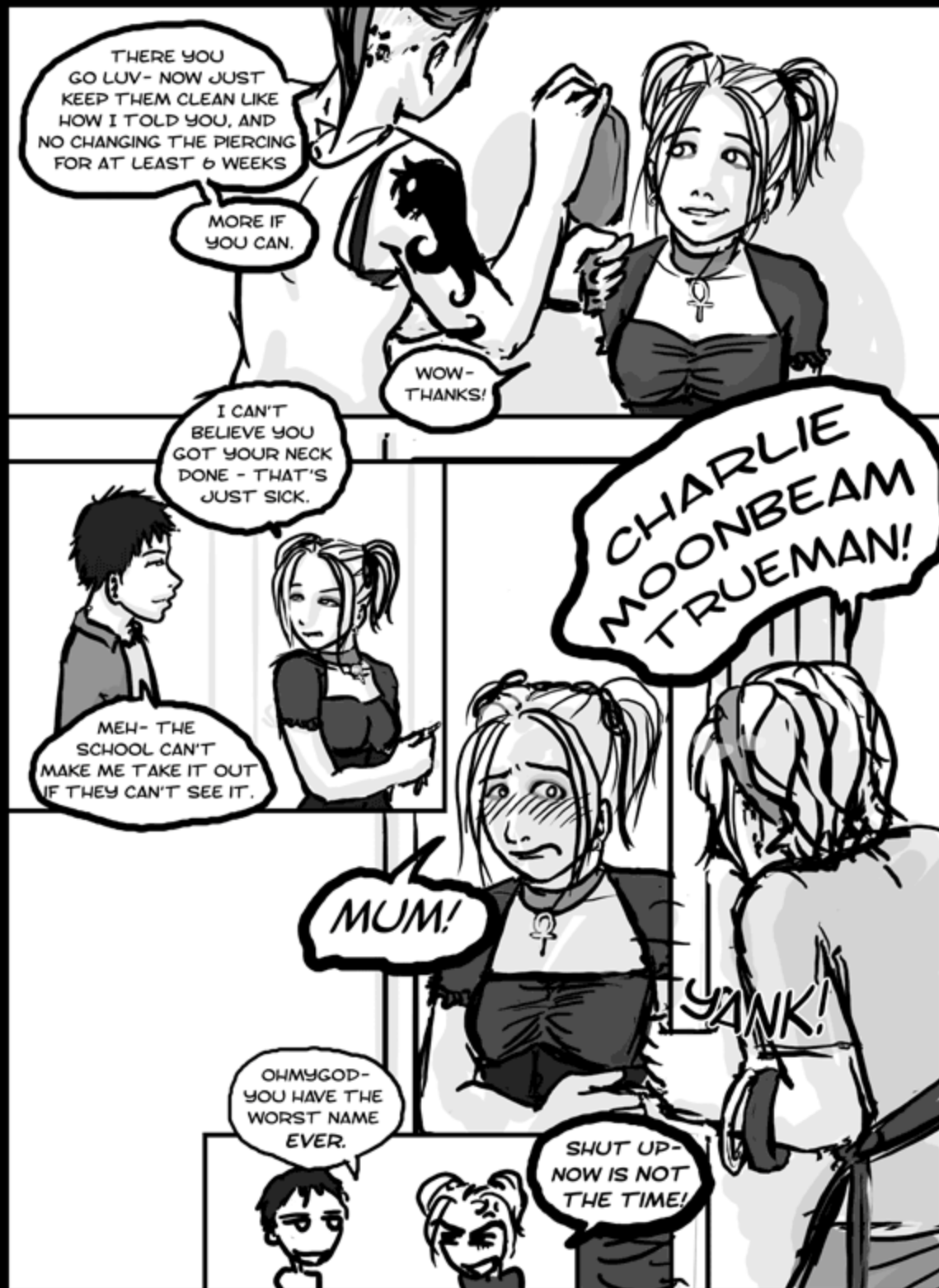
HEY TOM?

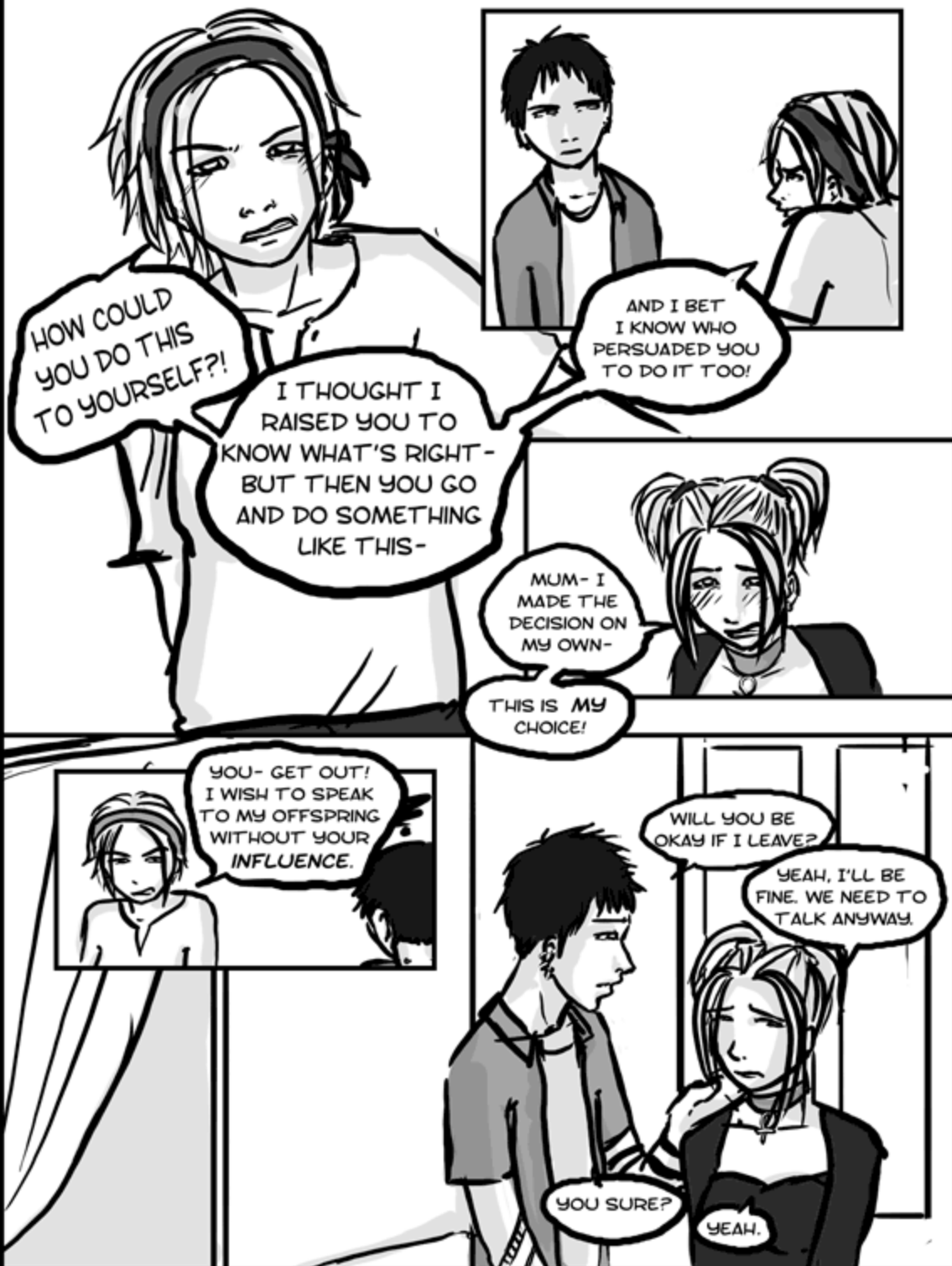


YEAH?

THIS IS ONE OF
YOUR MOST STUPID
IDEAS YET.

I KNOW-
THAT'S WHY
IT WILL WORK.







IT WAS
ABOUT GETTING
MY FUCKING EARS
PIERCED!

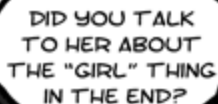
I TALKED TO CHARLIE THE NEXT
DAY AT SCHOOL (AFTER WE WERE
ALONE OF COURSE). IT SEEMED THAT
THE TALK WITH HER MUM HADN'T GONE
EXACTLY AS SHE'D PICTURED IT.

HER SUPPOSED SON
WALKS IN WEARING A
FUCKING DRESS-

AND ALL SHE CARES
ABOUT IS THAT I'VE
"POINTLESSLY INFLICTED
HARM" UPON MYSELF FOR
THE SAKE OF FASHION-

AND STOP
LAUGHING IT'S NOT
THAT FUNNY!

I THINK I LOVE
YOUR MUM.



DID YOU TALK
TO HER ABOUT
THE "GIRL" THING
IN THE END?

YEAH- EVENTUALLY.
SHE KNEW I WAS WEARING
GIRLS CLOTHES ALL ALONG
AND HADN'T SAID ANYTHING
BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T WANT
TO "STIFLE THE GENDER
EXPRESSION."

SO I TOLD HER
THAT I WANTED TO
BE A GIRL-
AND SHE WAS LIKE-

"GENDER
DOESN'T
MATTER"

AND

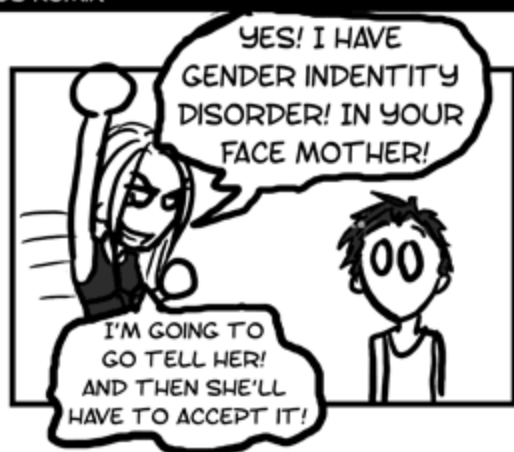
"BY ALLOCATING
WEARING DRESSES
AS FEMALE YOU'RE
JUST ENFORCING THE
GENDER STEREOTYPE!"

AND

"WHY CHANGE WHEN
YOU CAN LOOK LIKE
A GIRL WITHOUT
SURGERY?"

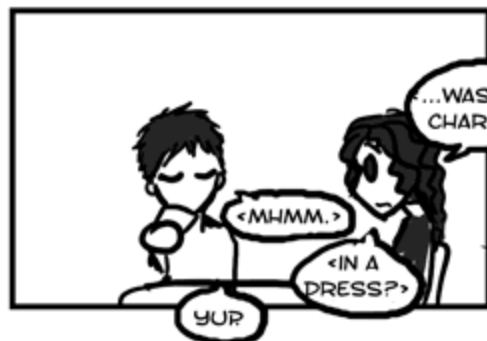
AND NOW I'M BEING
SENT TO A COUNSELLOR.

I'M HAPPY
FOR YOU.



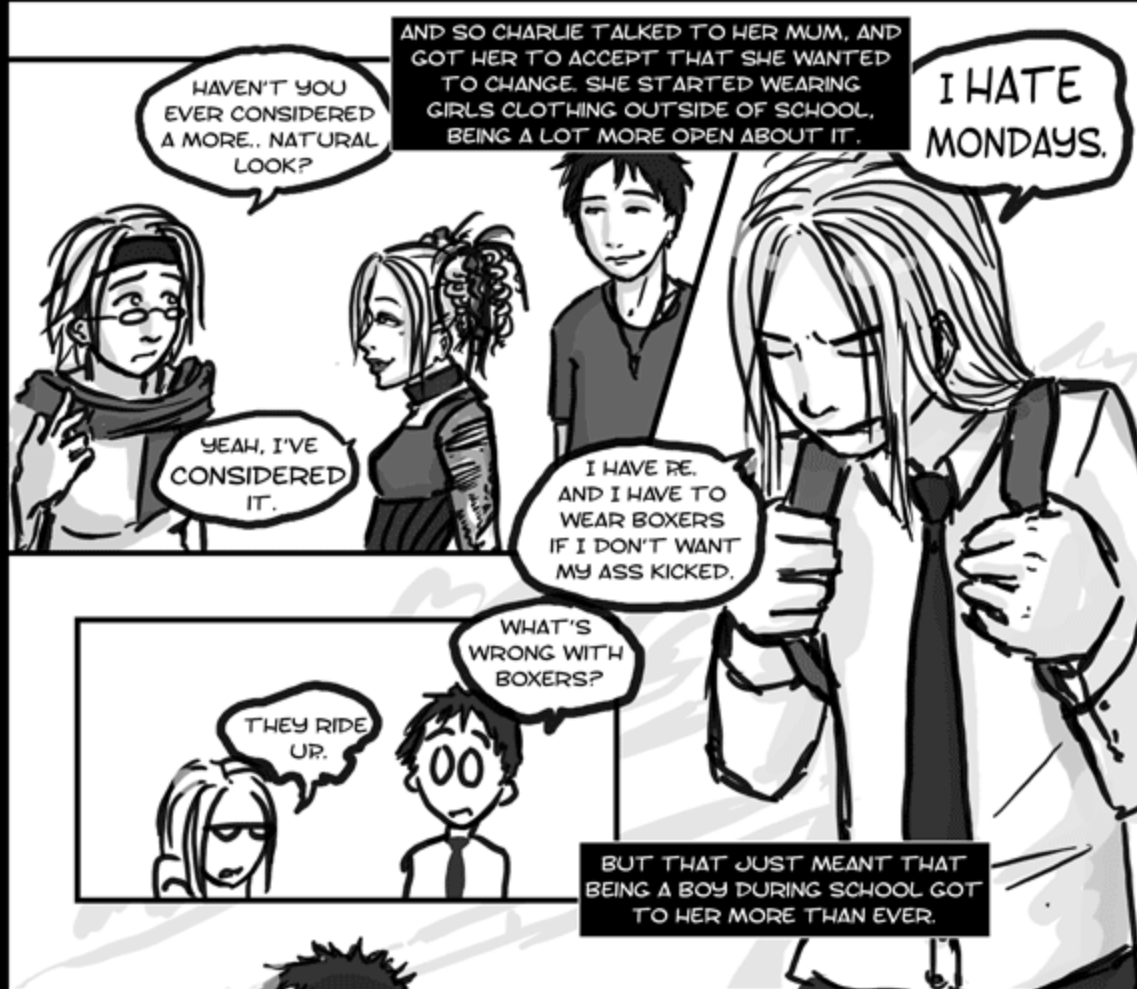
AND SO CHARLIE WENT TO A COUNSELLOR WHO WAS VERY NICE AND TALKED TO HER ABOUT HER GENDER.

SHE THEN PROCEEDED TO USE THE COUNSELLORS OPINION TO PERSUADE HER MOTHER ABOUT SAID GENDER.



I WAS VERY HAPPY THAT THINGS WERE MOVING ALONG FOR CHARLIE, SHE MADE IT LOOK SO EASY THOUGH- I STILL HADN'T TALKED TO MY MUM ABOUT IT AT ALL.





I DON'T
KNOW HOW
MUCH LONGER
I CAN DO THIS.

HEY- AT
LEAST YOU'VE
TOLD YOUR
MUM.

EVENTUALLY CHARLIE HAD ENOUGH,
AND DECIDED THAT SHE WOULD
COME OUT DURING SCHOOL TOO.

WE ONLY HAD A COUPLE OF WEEKS
LEFT UNTIL THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS,
WHICH MEANT FINAL EXAMS TOO.

IT ALSO MADE IT THE BEST
TIME TO DO IT BECAUSE AFTER
THIS YEAR, WE WOULDN'T BE
GOING BACK TO THAT SCHOOL
ANYWAY.

IT TOOK A LOT OF PRESSURE ON THE SCHOOL,
MOSTLY LEAD BY CHARLIE'S MUM, TO LET HER
GO IN HER CHOSEN GENDER.

BUT EVENTUALLY
THEY AGREED.

YOU LOOK
GREAT!

THANKS.

YOU COME RIGHT
HOME IF ANYTHING
BAD HAPPENS-
RIGHT MOONBEAM?

I'M GONNA BE
FINE MUM.

I THINK EVERYONE WAS WORRIED ABOUT
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN- PUBLIC SCHOOL ISN'T
VERY FORGIVING TO THOSE WHO ARE DIFFERENT.

I PROMISED MYSELF I WOULD PROTECT
HER THOUGH, WHATEVER HAPPENED.



IT WAS OKAY AT FIRST.

PEOPLE DIDN'T REALLY NOTICE CHARLIE AT INITIALLY. PROBABLY BECAUSE SHE JUST LOOKED LIKE ONE OF THE FIRST YEARS.

BUT PEOPLE IN HER LESSONS DEFINATELY DID NOTICE- BUT I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT BECAUSE WE ONLY SHARED MUSIC.

HOW'S YOUR DAY BEEN SO FAR?

IT'S BEEN OKAY. NO ONE'S PUNCHED ME YET, THE TEACHERS ARE BEING PRETTY GOOD ABOUT IT.

THERE WERE A COUPLE OF THREATS AT BREAK, BUT AT LUNCH ONE OF THE ART TEACHERS LET US EAT IN HIS ROOM.

BUT.. I THINK NATALIE GELN IS GOING TO START SOMETHING AFTER SCHOOL.

THAT BITCH? I CAN TAKE HER.

IT'S HER BOYFRIEND I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

LIKE CHARLIE PREDICTED, AT THE END OF THE DAY NATALIE WAS WAITING FOR US AT THE GATES.



AND WAITING WITH HER WERE ABOUT 10 OTHER PEOPLE.

ALL THERE TO HURT US, JUST FOR NOT BEING "NORMAL"



COME ON- IT'LL BE OKAY.

GO HOME EVERYONE!

THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE A FIGHT TODAY-

I KNOW ALL YOUR NAMES!

ONE OF THE TEACHERS STEPPED IN BEFORE THEY COULD DO ANYTHING.

APPARANTLY HE TAUGHT CHARLIE ART, AND IT WAS NICE TO KNOW WE HAD SOME SUPPORT.

AND SO OUR FATE AT THE HANDS OF NATALIE (AND CO) WAS AVOIDED.



SIR?

GO WAIT IN THE OFFICE- I'LL GIVE YOU GUYS A LIFT HOME.



WALKING TO SCHOOL
THE NEXT DAY WAS WHEN
THEY ACTUALLY GOT US.

YOU
SLEEP
OKAY?

YEAH.


I GOT HIT ON THE HEAD WITH
A STONE, AND AFTER THAT MY
MEMORY GETS A BIT FUZZY.

I REMEMBER THAT
THEY PULLED CHARLIE
AWAY FROM ME.


CHARLIE!

CHARLIE!

AND I COULDN'T
GET TO HER TO HELP



I FOUGHT BACK- BUT EVERYTHING
WAS BLURRY, AND I WAS *USELESS*.




I COULD STILL HEAR
THINGS THOUGH.




CHARLIE SCREAMING.



THE CRUNCH WHEN
THEY BROKE MY LEG.



THE THUD AS
KNUCKLES HIT MY
FACE.



THE POUNDING
OF BLOOD IN MY
EARS.




AND THEN-

SILENCE.




CHARLIE?

THEY HAD CUT CHARLIE'S HAIR OFF AND BROKEN HER WRIST. I FELT LIKE I HAD FAILED TO PROTECT HER.





YOU'RE AWAKE!
I-I'LL GO GET THE NURSE.



WAIT - I -
OH GOD YOU'RE OKAY.

BUT I DIDN'T CARE BECAUSE SHE WAS ALIVE, AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERED

YEAH,
YOU AREN'T THOUGH.



MY LEG WAS BROKEN, AS WERE A COUPLE OF MY RIBS. EVERYTHING HURT. BUT SHE WAS OKAY. SHE WAS THERE.

«I WAS
REALLY SCARED
YOU KNOW-»

EVENTUALLY MY
MUM TURNED UP

«GOD- WORK
WOULDN'T EVEN LET ME
OFF TO SEE YOU AFTER IT
HAPPENED- I HAD TO GET
UPDATES THROUGH
CHARLIE'S MUM.»

«I'M PROUD THAT
YOU PROTECTED YOUR
FRIEND-»

«BUT I COULD OF
HELPED YOU KNOW.»

«I-I COULD OF
FIGURED OUT A WAY
TO DROP YOU OFF
AT SCHOOL OR
SOMETHING.»

«YOU COULD HAVE
TOLD ME CHARLIE
WAS GOING TO DO IT.»

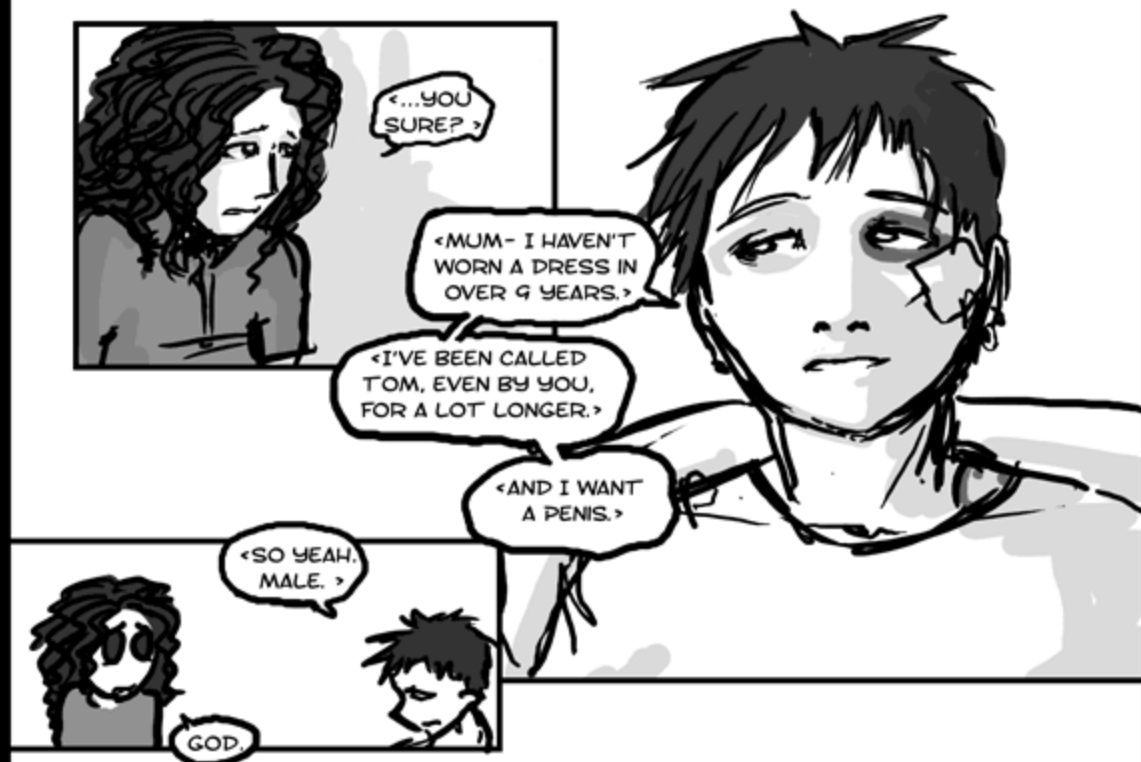
«I COULD
HAVE HELPED.»

«DONE SOMETHING
TO PROTECT YOU.»

«BUT I COULDN'T,
AND NOW YOU'RE IN
HOSPITAL-»

«FUCK. I DON'T WANT
TO BE A CRAP MUM.»

«MUM, I'M
A BOY.»





WHEN I WAS UNCONCIOUS CHARLIE
HAD TALKED TO THE POLICE
ABOUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



IT'S MY
TRIBUTE
TO MOTHER
EARTH-

THEY WERE GOING TO
PROSECUTE BUT DIDN'T KNOW
HOW WELL IT WORK OUT BECAUSE
THE OFFENDERS WERE UNDERAGE.



CHARLIE'S MUM WANTED HER
DAUGHTER SAFE- AND THOUGHT
THAT THE POLICE WOULDN'T
BE ABOUT TO DO THAT.

ORANGE!

BUT YOU CAN'T!

WE'LL-
WE'LL
CLASH!

NO
WE WON'T-
WE'RE LIKE
TIC-TACS!

SO CHARLIE WAS
MOVING, AND I WAS
STAYING BEHIND.

I TRIED TO NOT LET IT GET TO ME-
ESPECIALLY AS I DIDN'T WANT TO TAINT
THE TIME WE DID HAVE LEFT TOGETHER.

WE HAD A SUMMER TOGETHER
BEFORE SHE MOVED AND WENT
TO COLLEGE.

I KNEW SHE WASN'T GOING TO ABANDON
ME, AND THAT WE COULD VISIT EACH
OTHER. BUT IT WOULDN'T BE THE SAME.

TO COPE WITH CHARLIE MOVING I GOT ANOTHER TATTOO- THIS TIME AN EYE ON MY ELBOW. SORT'A A WAY TO HELP ME SEE WHAT TO DO NEXT TIME SOMETHING HAPPENED.

I GOT SOME FACIAL PIERCINGS TO GO WITH IT - I COULD FINALLY WEAR THEM NOW SCHOOL WAS OVER FOR GOOD.

MY LEG WAS STILL HEALING, SO I COULDN'T GO TO CAPOERIA AND MUM HAD BANNED ME FROM WALKING ON MY HANDS WHEN I STARTED GOING UP STAIRS.

SO I WAS PRETTY MUCH BORED OUT OF MY MIND AND ABOUT TO LOSE A FRIEND.

SOMETIMES- IT'S JUST THAT NOTHING SEEMS WORTH SAVING- I CAN'T WATCH HER SLIP AWAY...

AND SO I PRACTICED ON MY GUITAR, AND USED IT TO HELP ME EXPRESS WHAT I WAS FEELING.

OH FOR
FUCKS SAKE!

STOP ANGSTING AND
BLOODY WELL ASK ME
IF WE CAN MOVE TO
WHERE CHARLIE'S
GOING!

SLAM

FUCKING
WANNABE
MARTYR



GUESS WHAT?
WE'RE MOVING TO
SMALLTOWN!

I'LL BE GOING TO
THE COLLEGE THERE-
ISN'T IT GREAT?

YOU WHAT?!

I MEAN- GREAT!
WOW- WHERE ABOUTS
ARE YOU GOING TO BE
MOVING TO?

COMBINED WITH THE LEGALITIES
OF MOVING HOUSE AND OTHER
CRAP IT WASN'T UNTILL A COUPLE
MONTHS LATER WHEN WE MOVED.

BY THEN MY CAST WAS OFF,
AND I COULD SAY GOODBYE
TO MY SENSEI PROPERLY.

LEAVING EH?
WELL, YOU DID
GOOD SO FAR.
WANNA
FIGHT BEFORE
YOU GO?

SURE.

WHAT PART OF
"ONE MONTH
NON-STRENUOUS
ACTIVITY" DID YOU
NOT GET?

THE NON
BIT.

...SHUT UP AND
HELP ME MOVE
THESE BOXES.

KHAOS
COMMUNITY
KOLLEGE

AND SO I FOUND MYSELF IN A
NEW COLLEGE WHERE NO ONE
KNEW ME, (EXCEPT CHARLIE OF
COURSE) AND I COULD MAKE
FRIENDS AS TOM, THE REAL ME.

IT WAS EXHILARATING, AND
ABSOLUTELY TERRIFYING
AT THE SAME TIME.

I MET AMBER FIRST.



RIGHT. LET'S
INTRODUCE YOU TO
SOME PEOPLE YOU'LL
ACTUALLY LIKE.

HI.

SHE WAS SMART ENOUGH TO REALISE
THAT I WOULDN'T SIT HAPPILY HER
BIMBO SQUAD AND INTRODUCED ME
TO SOME OTHER FRIENDS OF HERS.



HI
ALEX.

MOST SPECIFICALLY,
ALEX MURPHY.

HE WAS
JUST.. GUH.

LIKE THE PERFECT WAY
TO EXPLAIN WHY I ONLY
LIKED MEN.

AND JUDGING FROM THE COLOUR
OF HIS FACE, HE LIKED ME TOO.

AND THAT, THAT
WAS JUST AMAZING.

I'D DATED MEN BEFORE, BUT
ONLY AS MARIA. AND THERE I
WAS, AS TOM, AND ALEX LIKED ME
AS A MAN...AND YEAH. AMAZING.

AND THEN I MET NAY.
SHE WAS COOL.



YOU WANNA
COME OVER FRIDAY
AND JAM?

UM...

I MADE GOOD FRIENDS
WITH THOSE TWO OVER THE
NEXT FEW WEEKS.

MURFS IS
COMING. HE
PLAYS DRUMS

...OKAY.

UM, I CAN CATCH
THE 17 HOME WITH
YOU TOO- IF THAT'S
OKAY I MEAN.

SURE YOU
CAN RIDE ME-
I MEAN RIDE
WITH ME.

NAY PLAYED GUITAR,
SO IT WAS NICE TO PLAY
WITH HER, EVEN THOUGH
HER CRUSH ON ME MADE
THINGS A BIT AWKWARD.

BUT IT MEANT MORE TIME
WITH MURFS, SPECIFICALLY
STARING AT HIM WHILE HE
PLAYED.

I KNEW HITTING ON HIM
WAS PROBABLY A BAD IDEA,
BUT FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE I
REALLY WANTED SOMEONE.

AND I JUST COULDN'T
STOP MYSELF

UM, YOUR
HAND- ITS...

OOPS. SLIPPED

AND THEN HIS
SHIRT RIDES UP-
AND HE'S JUST SO
BLOODY EDIBLE.

HMM.

I TOLD CHARLIE ALL ABOUT
MY TIME WITH ALEX.

I'M SO GLAD
AMBER INTRODUCED
US.

SHE DIDN'T REALLY LIKE TO HANG AROUND
WITH ME MUCH DURING COLLEGE. I THINK SHE
WAS TRYING TO FIND HER OWN FEET FIRST,
SO I WAS REALLY PROUD OF HER.

HUH?
AMBER? I KNOW
AN AMBER.

CURLY BLONDE,
GLASSES?

YEAH,
THAT'S HER.
SHE'S NICE.

SO, WANNA
GO SEE DARK
KNIGHT?

SURE.

WOW, THE NEW KID
MOVED IN PRETTY FAST.
I BET HE CAN'T WAIT TO
GET A HOLD OF YOUR
PANSY ASS.

BUT THE ONLY THING WAS,
AS I GOT TO KNOW ALEX MORE,
I ALSO MET JAMIE DAVIES.

I'M NOT A
PANSY- AND
SHUT UP JAMIE!

FOR FUCKS
SAKE- STOP
CALLING ME GAY!



I HATED JAMIE.

HE HAD SPOILED ALL OF MY PLANS FOR GENTLY BRINGING ALEX OUT OF HIS GAY SHELL.



I SPENT A LOT OF TIME RANTING ABOUT HIM TO CHARLIE.

AND THEN IT HAPPENED AGAIN THIS LUNCHTIME!

MOSTLY BECAUSE AROUND THAT TIME I ALSO REALISED THAT I WOULD REALLY LIKE ME AND ALEX TO BE DATING IN SOME WAY.

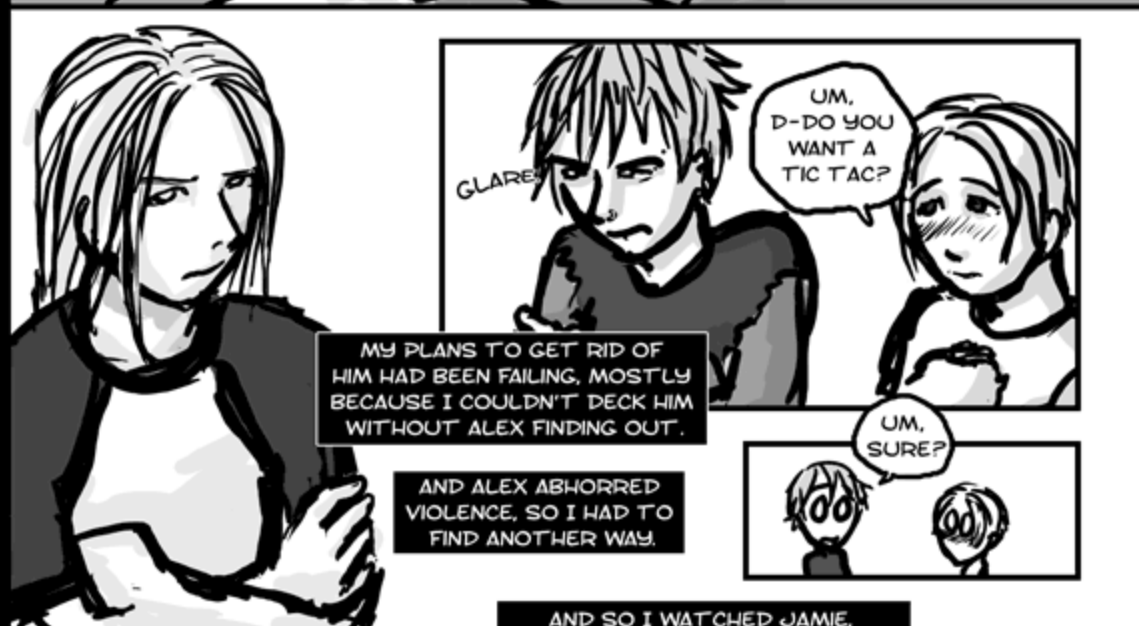
AND EVERYONE JUST SIT'S THERE LIKE IT'S THE MOST NORMAL THING IN THE WORLD-

IF I WAS ALEX I WOULD BEAT HIS FACE IN- BUT NOOOO, HE DOESN'T RESORT TO VIOLENCE.

LIKE, PROPERLY.

AND HE HAD SPOILED THAT.





AND THEN I FOUND SOMETHING...
AND MY GOD IT WAS PERFECT.

JAMIE'S TWO BEST FRIENDS, MARK
AND STEVE, MOST OBVIOUSLY, DEFINATELY,
WANTED TO, OR EVEN HAD PLAYED HIDE THE
HAPPY WITH EACH OTHER.

AND WHEN JAMIE FOUND THIS OUT,
IT WOULD ABSOLUTELY RUIN HIM.



THOUGH I COULDN'T JUST
OUT MARK AND STEVE.

AMBER WAS DATING MARK, SO IT
WOULDN'T BE FAIR ON HER, OR THEM.

AND IF MURFS FOUND OUT
HE WOULDN'T LIKE ME.

SO, MARK
AND AMBER
EH?

TWITCH

YOU DON'T
LIKE MARK?

SO I MENTIONED SOME
THINGS TO NAY

NO.

UM,
WHY?

BECAUSE HE'S A
SMALL PENISED
BLUE WEARING
FREAK-

WHO DOESN'T
DESERVE AMBER
IN THE SLIGHTEST!

AND SOON DISCOVERED THAT MARK
AND STEVE WEREN'T THE ONLY
BEST FRIENDS TO WANT TO TAKE
THINGS FURTHER.

AND THAT IF AMBER BROKE
UP WITH MARK THEN MANKIND
WOULD BE SAFE FROM NAY'S RAGE.

WHICH WAS GOOD.

AND SO I TOLD AMBER ABOUT MARK AND STEVE. SHE LOOKED KINDA PANICKED, BUT THAT WAS PROBABLY THE WAY I IMPLIED THAT SHE WAS DOING THE SAME THING AS MARK.

WHICH MEANT THAT NAY PROBABLY HAD A GOOD CHANCE OF GETTING HER.

NOTHING HAPPENED FOR A WHILE AFTER THAT BUT AMBER SEEMED TO BE A PLOTTER LIKE ME, SO I KNEW SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN SOON.

I JUST HAD TO WAIT.

HAHA
OH
NOTHING,
NOTHING,
CARRY ON.

HEH

WHAT'S SO
FUCKING
FUNNY?!

WATCHING JAMIE GAY BASH HAD
BECOME HILARIOUS THOUGH-



GRIN

MAN...
YOU'RE SO
TENSE.

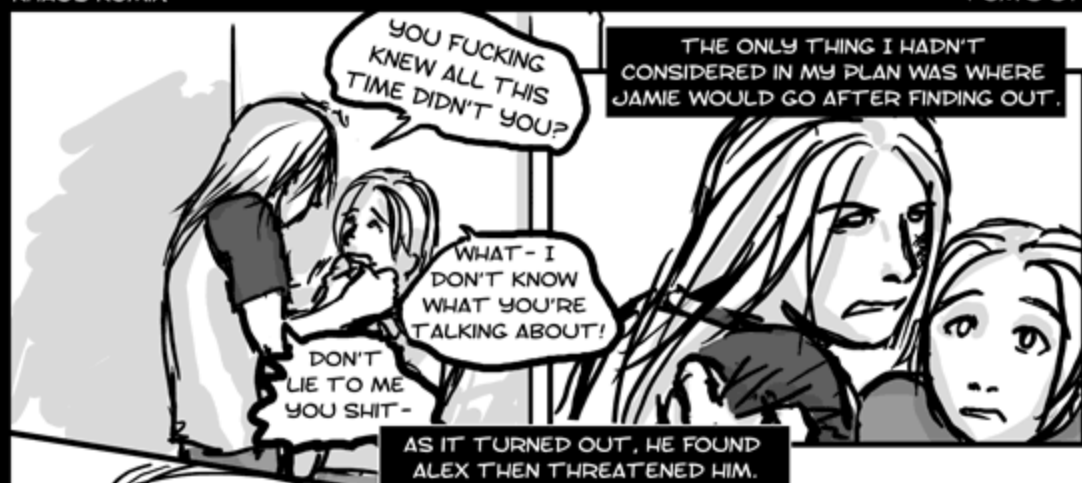
SO WAITING WAS
FINE...

YOU NEED TO
LOOSEN UP MORE
WHEN YOU PLAY
DRUMS.

ESPECIALLY AS
I SPENT THE TIME
SEDUCING ALEX.

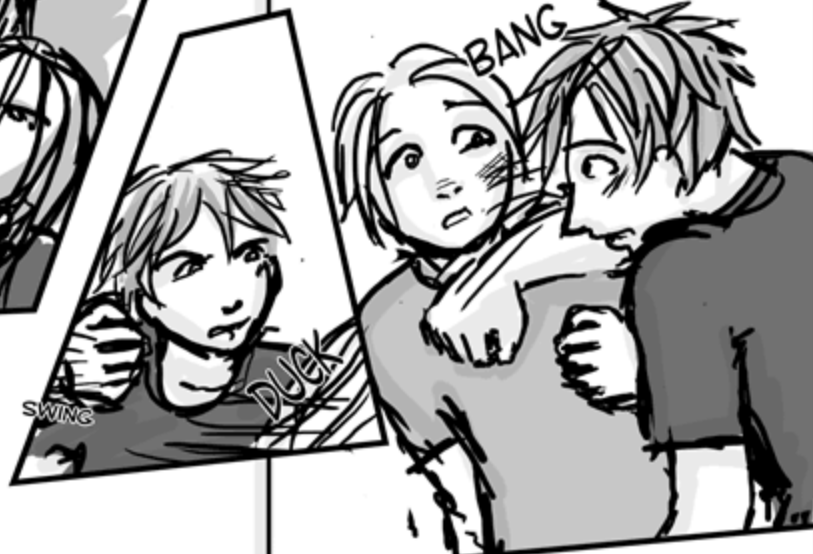
STEAM

STEAM





BUT THEN I HIT
ALEX BY MISTAKE.



OH SHIT MAN
I'M SO SORRY!

BUT IN THE END IT
WASN'T TOO BAD.



YOU'RE SO
DEAD NOW!

THAT'S
ENOUGH!

ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING
WHAT ALEX DID NEXT.



MARK AND STEVE CAME OUT AFTER THAT, AND SOON AFTER AMBER STARTED HANGING WITH OUR GROUP MORE.

NAY SEEMED PLEASED, AND AMBER TURNED OUT TO BE PRETTY COOL.



AND JAMIE STOPPED HARRASSING ALEX, WHICH WAS GOOD.



BUT THAT ALL PALED IN COMPARISON TO ALEX GETTING HIS HAIR CUT.



BECAUSE HIS NAPE IS INCREDIBLY SEXY, AND SHOULD BE AN EDIBLE FOOD.



YOU STILL COMING OVER TOMORROW?



YEAH-
I STILL?



YEAH- SEE YOU THERE!



OKAY, IT WASN'T JUST THE NEW HAIR- ALEX WAS GETTING MORE CONFIDENT. AND IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS FINALLY OPEN TO THE IDEA OF BEING GAY.

WITH ME.

VIGOROUSLY.



AND SO I WENT
OVER ALEX'S THAT
SATURDAY.

YOU
TOM?

I WASN'T TOO NERVOUS,
UNTIL I KNOCKED ON THE DOOR
AND THOUGHT "HOLY SHIT - WHAT'S
HIS FAMILY ACTUALLY LIKE?"

UM,
YES?

WELCOME.

AND I MUST SAY, HIS
SISTER KELLY, IS
FUCKING SCARY.

I'LL
MAKE
TEA

THE REST OF HIS
FAMILY SEEMED OKAY,
MUCH TO MY RELIEF

OOOH, HAVEN'T
SEEN THAT MUCH
ORANGE IN A
WHILE.

UM..
WHERE'S
ALEX?

EWWWWW-
HE'S GOT ONE
IN HIS NECK!

THOUGH IT WAS WEIRD
BEING THE TALLEST PERSON
OUT OF ALL OF THEM.

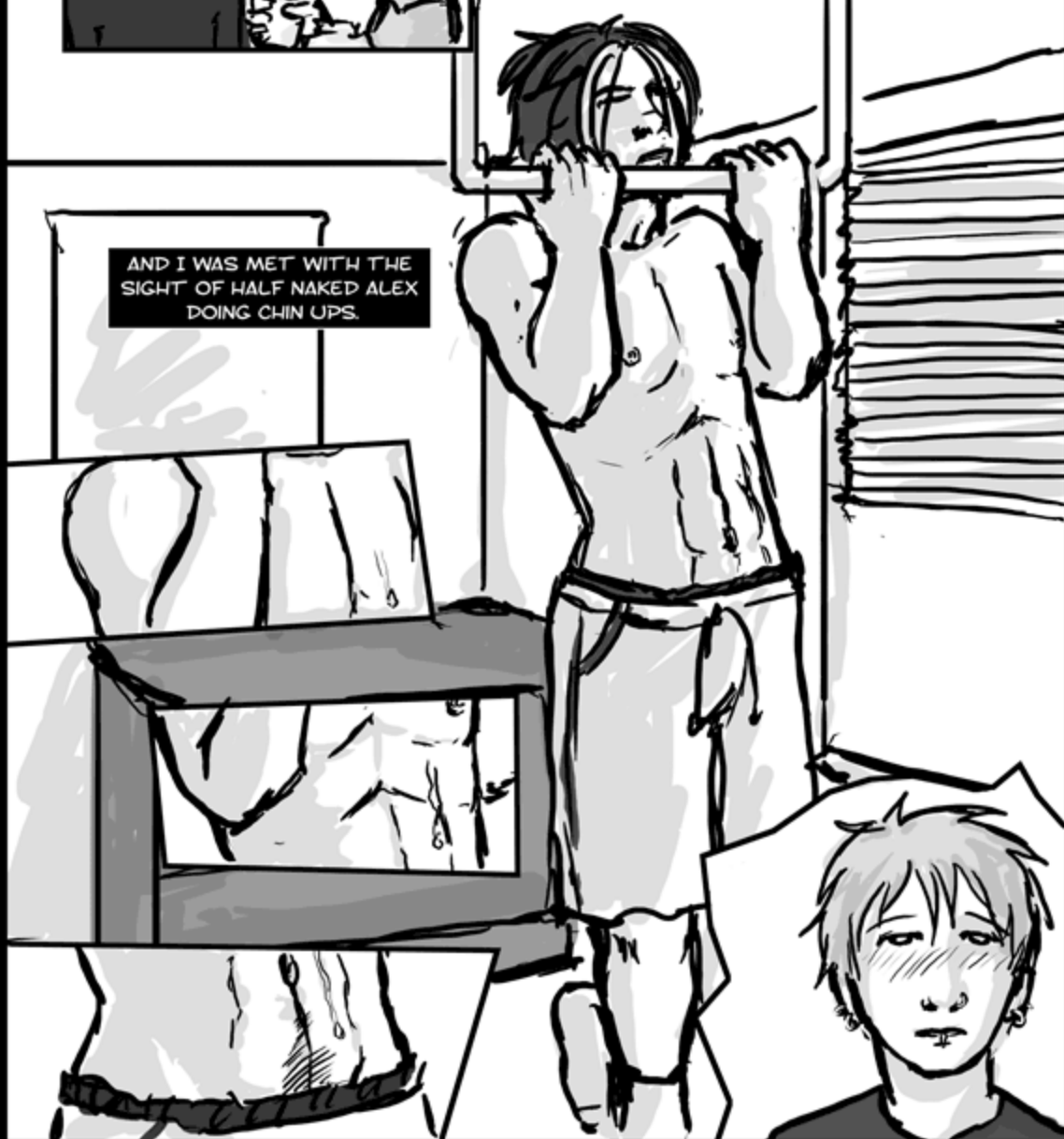


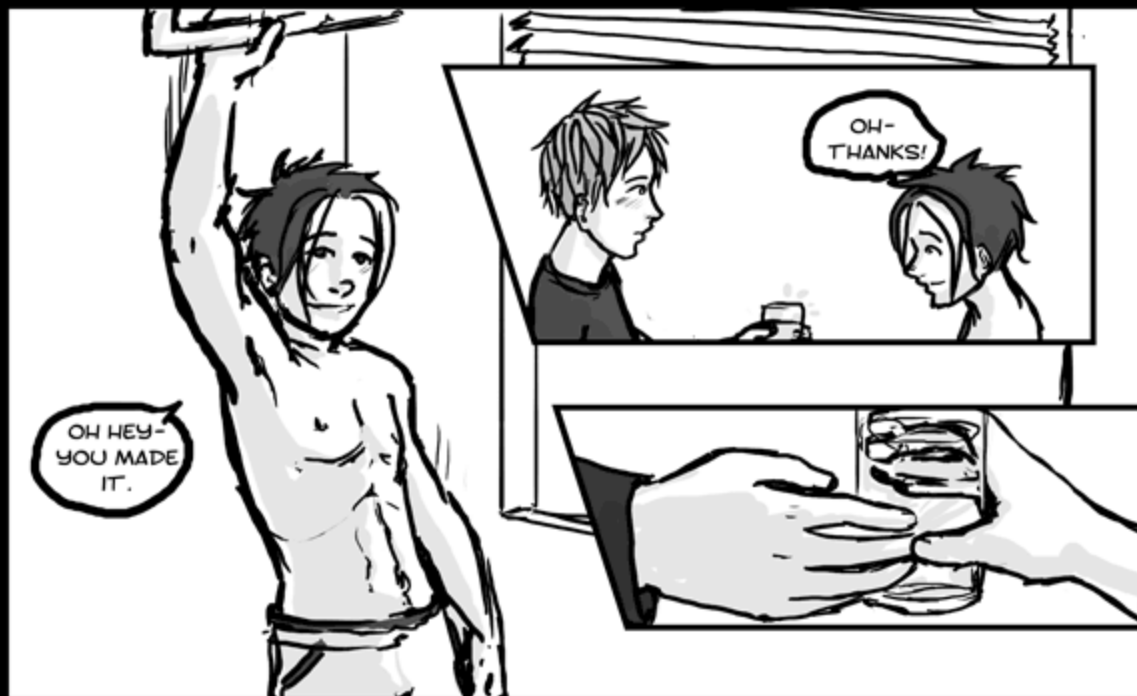
ALEX'S ROOM WAS THE FIRST
ONE NEXT TO THE STAIRS.



IT WAS UNLOCKED AND
I HAD MY HANDS FULL, SO I
JUST WALKED RIGHT IN
WITHOUT KNOCKING.

AND I WAS MET WITH THE
SIGHT OF HALF NAKED ALEX
DOING CHIN UPS.










AND SO THAT WAS MY
FIRST KISS AS THOMAS
BLAKE.

AND I'D HAVE TO SAY,
I ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT



IT REALLY WAS A
MOMENT WHEN I
REALISED THAT ALL
THE TROUBLE OF
BECOMING A MAN
WOULD BE WORTH IT.

BECAUSE NOTHING
ELSE HAD EVER FELT
SO RIGHT BEFORE.

AND THEN WE
WATCHED TRANSFORMERS
WHICH WAS SO CUTE BECAUSE
YOU COULD TELL HE WAS
TRYING NOT TO GEEK OUT
ON IT -

THOUGH HE PUT
HIS SHIRT BACK ON.

BUT THEN WE KEPT
KISSING ALL THE TIME.


BUT THEY WERE ALL SUCH
CUTE, SWEET KISSES- BUT
THAT WAS FINE BECAUSE
THEY WERE PERFECT.

AND IT'S ALL
BECAUSE JAMIE'S
GONE.

HE'S SUCH A
BASTARD.

I HATE HIM.


HE SHOULD DIE.



AND THEN ME AND
ALEX KINDA STARTED
GOING OUT.

WHICH WAS GREAT.

WELL, AT LEAST
WHILE IT LASTED.



SHUT UP-
YOU DON'T KNOW
SHIT ABOUT JAMIE!



I JUST - WELL...
I'M FED UP OF THE WAY
YOU TALK ABOUT HIM.

AND HE, UM, SEEMS A
NICE GUY.

I-I'VE KINDA BEEN
TALKING TO HIM. HE'S
REALLY NICE.



HE'S MY BOYFRIEND.



I HAD TO TELL
ALEX.

UM, IS IT OKAY
TO WALK HOME
WITH YOU TODAY?

OH YEAH SURE!
I'M OFF 3RD PERIOD-
WHAT ABOUT YOU?

BEFORE OUR RELATIONSHIP WENT
ANY FUTHER, AND THE CHANCES
OF HIM JUST FINDING OUT GOT
A LOT HIGHER.

SO THEY'RE
HAVING A SLEEP OVER
THIS WEEKEND-

WHICH IS ALL WELL
AND GOOD, BUT IT MEANS
KELLY WILL BE AT MY
HOUSE FOR THE REST OF
THE WEEKEND.

I'D NEVER REALLY TOLD
ANYONE ABOUT MY PAST-
THEY'D ALL JUST KNOWN ME
FROM BEFORE.

SHE'S 20- I DON'T
GET WHY SHE CAN'T STAY
WITH HER OWN BLOODY FREINDS.

AND I WAS SO
FUCKING SCARED.

I WAS SCARED THAT
HE WOULD TREAT ME
DIFFERENTLY.

ALEX?

...I NEED
TO TELL YOU
SOMETHING.

THAT I WOULD NO LONGER
BE TOM TO HIM.

AND THAT HE WOULD NO
LONGER BE MY ALEX.

YEAH?

BUT WHEN IT CAME
DOWN TO IT, I JUST
COULDN'T TELL HIM.

AND SO I DID THE ONLY
OTHER OPTION.

...WE NEED
TO BREAK
UP

I REALLY DIDN'T WANT TO
DO IT, BUT CHARLIE HAD MADE
ME REALISE THAT I NEEDED TO
TELL HIM, OR I NEEDED TO END IT.

I MADE SURE NOT TO DO IT AT HIS
HOUSE BECAUSE I KNEW I WOULDN'T
BE ABLE TO BE AROUND HIM
SO SOON AFTER.

...DID I
DO SOMETHING
WRONG?

NO, IT'S JUST-
FUCK.

THERE'S SOMETHING
ABOUT ME YOU DON'T KNOW..
AND IT'S NOT FAIR TO DATE
YOU WITHOUT YOU KNOWING...
AND .. I'M NOT REALLY READY
TO TELL ANYONE YET.

O-O-KAY,

I GAVE HIM A SHORTENED
VERSION OF MY REASONS.

AND WE'RE STILL
FRIENDS RIGHT?

YEAH, IF YOU
STILL WANT TO BE,

UM, MY HOUSE
IS THERE- I'LL SEE
YOU TOMORROW?

AND THEN FLED.

OKAY.

AFTER THAT
THINGS SUCKED.

I STILL WANTED ALEX, SO
MUCH. AND I HAD IT ONCE,
AND COULDN'T FORGET HOW
IT FELT.



HE SEEMED HURT BY IT ALL,
BUT HE ACTED LIKE NORMAL
TO COVER IT UP

WEEKS WENT BY, AND ME
AND CHARLIE STILL HADN'T
REALLY TALKED TO EACH
OTHER.

AND I KINDA SAW HER
MAKING OUT WITH JAMIE.

I MEAN, HEARING ABOUT
IT WAS ONE THING. SEEING
IT WAS TOTALLY DIFFERENT.



OH GUH-
GEEZE.

EWEEEEWWW

I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER
TO BE WORRIED FOR MY FRIEND
OR HAPPY THAT MY ENEMY
WAS IN SUCH AN IRONIC POSITION.

AND THEN I GOT HAULLED
TO THE GROUP'S BLOODY
"CAMP OUT".

WHICH MEANT THEM ALL
GETTING DRUNK, WITH ME
WATCHING.

AND I JUST KNEW SOMETHING
WAS ABOUT TO GO HORRIBLY
WRONG.

I'D LOOK OUT
AROUND THE FOURTH
BEER. THAT'S WHEN
THE BOYS GET MORE
FRIENDLY.

IT STARTED WITH ALEX DRINKING BEER, THEN HE MOVED ONTO RUM.

HE SEEMED FINE, JUST A BIT MORE CUDDLY, LIKE AMBER HAD SAID.

IT TURNS OUT THAT WHEN ALEX IS DRUNK, HE GETS A BIT MORE OPEN ABOUT THINGS.

EVERYONE WAS HAPPILY IGNORING US IN THE CORNER.

UNLIKE MARK'S FIRST TIME

...BUT THEN MARK AND STEVE STARTED TALKING ABOUT ALL THE GAY SEX THEY'D BEEN HAVING.

ALEX WAS FACINATED.

SO I JUST SAT THERE, DRINKING ENERGY DRINKS.

ATTEMPTING TO IGNORE EVERYTHING.

(WELL, I DID PAY A BIT OF ATTENTION TO ALEX'S BUM, BUT THAT WAS IT.)

SO, UM- YOU EVER HAD SEX WITH A MAN?

CHOKES





IS- IS THAT
THE REASON WHY
YOU BROKE UP
WITH ME?



WHAP?

IF YOU'RE NOT READY
TO HAVE SEX AGAIN
BECAUSE SOMETHING
HAPPENED-

THAT'S FINE-
I DON'T CARE
ABOUT THAT!

THE FUC-
NO! THAT'S
NOT IT!

*NURGES

THEN- WHAT IS
IT TOM?

PLEASE- I KNOW
YOU'RE NOT READY
TO TELL ME-

BUT I JUST CAN'T
STOP LIKING YOU.

I NEED TO
BE WITH YOU-
IT HURTS NOT
TO BE.

A black and white comic panel showing two young men, Tom and Alex, in a close conversation. Tom is on the left, looking at Alex on the right. Alex is holding Tom's hand. There are three speech bubbles and two text boxes in this panel.

PLEASE
TOM?

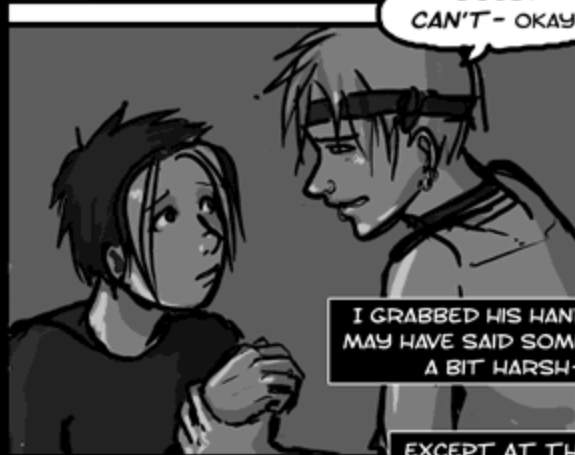
JUST TELL
ME WHY?

ALEX STARTED TO GET A BIT
CLOSE- SPECIFICALLY HOW CLOSE
HIS HAND WAS TO MY CHEST.


ALEX-
I-I

I DIDN'T WANT TO COME
THIS FAR TO BE FOUND OUT
BY A DRUNK GROPE, SO I
PANICKED.


I JUST
CAN'T- OKAY?

A black and white comic panel showing Tom and Alex. Tom is on the left, looking away with a nervous expression. Alex is on the right, looking at Tom. There are two text boxes in this panel.

I GRABBED HIS HAND, AND
MAY HAVE SAID SOMETHING
A BIT HARSH-

A black and white comic panel showing a close-up of Alex. He has a sad or thoughtful expression, looking down. There is one text box in this panel.

EXCEPT AT THAT MOMENT
WE REALISED THAT ALEX'S
LEG WAS ON FIRE.

A black and white comic panel showing a close-up of Tom. He is looking upwards with a surprised or hopeful expression. There are three text boxes in this panel.

...AND THAT'S WHERE
MY TELLING OF THIS
STORY ENDS. I'VE TALKED
LONG ENOUGH AS IT IS.

MY NAME IS
TOMAS BLAKE.

THIS IS MY STORY.

END